

What Constitutes an Authentic Text?

by Carol Gaab

There has been a great debate in recent months about what constitutes authentic reading in the language classroom. There is no debate that reading and understanding authentic texts is the GOAL of the language classroom, but there are definitely differing opinions about when and how authentic texts should be used.

As a publisher and author, my goal is to produce materials that are as authentic as possible, given the various ability levels and ages of language learners. TPRS Publishing materials are strategically written in an effort to embed bits of authentic language in semi-authentic texts. **Semi**-authentic texts help beginning language learners develop the necessary skills to eventually understand and interact with **authentic** texts.

As a teacher, my goal is to use high-interest, highly comprehensible materials as a 'hook' or a platform to engage students and flood them with CCCI. (Compelling, Contextualized, Comprehensible Input). Each text or topic must be so interesting that students naturally engage—without being intrinsically motivated and without conscious effort. TPRS Publishing novels provide an ideal platform for providing CCCI, but remember **brains crave novelty!** There are endless sources of authentic texts that teachers can use to enhance instruction and keep it fresh. (Thus, the reason we add so many outside and additional resources to our novels' Teacher Resource Guides.)

Recently Kristy Placido featured a great blog post about how she uses authentic texts (even though they may not be as comprehensible as she would like) as hooks to engage students. Kristy searches for texts that are, in her words, *"readily comprehensible, or at least comprehensible enough that I can exploit it for some teacher-provided comprehensible input."* Read more on her blog at <http://kplacido.com/2013/04/20/authentic-resources-versus-tprs-or-a-happy-marriage-of-the-two/>

There are a host of sources for finding suitable authentic texts, and I need to thank numerous colleagues from various learning communities for sharing these ideas: Kristy Placido, Carrie Toth, Leslie Davison, Martina Bex, Michele Whaley, Sara Elizabeth Cottrell and others!

Both **Kristy** (<http://kplacido.com>) and **Elizabeth** (<http://musicuentos.com>) have some great **TV commercials** that serve as unique and engaging platforms for providing CI.

Martina's blog (<http://martinabex.com>) is full of great ideas for providing CI through authentic texts, as does **Cynthia Hitz** (<http://palmyraspanish1.blogspot.com>)

Michele Whaley (<http://mjtpers.wordpress.com>) shares powerful tools and recently shared her insight on using MovieTalk (<http://www.focalskills.info/articles/moviesfs.html>).

Zachary Jones has a plethora of ideas for incorporating authentic music into instruction. (<http://zachary-jones.com/zambombazo>)

Obviously, this is not an exhaustive list! There are others who have contributed great ideas and great resources as well. It doesn't matter if you call yourself a TPRS teacher, a TCI teacher or an Eclectic teacher. We are all on the same page and all have the same goal: To help students develop FLUENCY and a love for language! Each of us will follow multiple paths in an effort to help our students reach the final destination of FLUENCY! Enjoy the ride!